

and love people can complete each other, because the gift which one does not have, the other has and conversely. Thus, in a wholly spiritual manner all liturgized Orthodox Christians become relatives “by blood” also. We are constantly reconciled with each other and with the All Holy God.

### **The Divine Liturgy**

The Divine Liturgy is paradise on earth. It is the revelation of the Kingdom, the utmost place and way of life of man. Here the primary goal of the Christian is realized, which according to Saint Seraphim of Sarov is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. Here is the workshop of holiness. Here we meet with the living God. Here we receive the infinite qualities of the Holy Spirit, when however with our life we make “room” for Him to come find us.

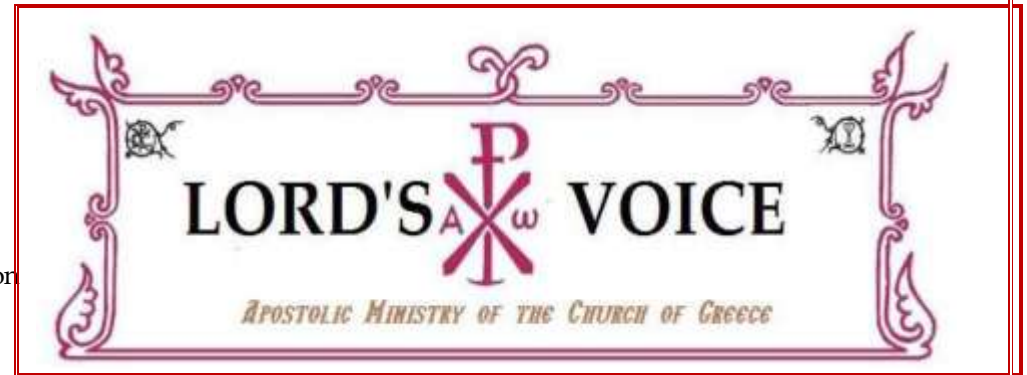
It is not by chance that the Holy Spirit “in the form of a dove” was revealed and stood on the head of the baptized Christ. The dove is a very sensitive bird, so that even the slightest noise and the slightest movement startle it and it leaves. So for this reason, Orthodox Christians must with the fear of God, be diligent in being cleansed from the many passions which are difficult to fight and name, which firmly possess us, thunder-striking them with repentance, desire and fervor for prayer, which these again are fruits of the All Holy Spirit.

If we do not pay attention to our life, the grace of the Holy Spirit departs, retreats, and the person, in the form of various punishments tastes the fruits of his works. This refers to that condition, to which man is handed over to, on account of obvious or hidden pride and which we pray against in the Lord’s Prayer, when we ask from God “and lead us not into temptation”. This refers to the utmost temptation of the darkening of the mind, where a person not only does not distinguish what is correct from what is mistaken, light from darkness, but he also hates the light, because his works are wicked (John 3:19-20).

### **The Descent of the Holy Spirit**

The descent of the Holy Spirit at the moment of the changing of the Precious Gifts overshadows us also: “Send down Thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here presented”. Precisely as the disciples then, in the upper room of Jerusalem received the Holy Spirit in the form of fiery tongues, thus we also in the upper room of the sacred Church live the overshadowing of the Comforter in our mind, heart and body.

Furthermore the offering of incense also is related with the Holy Spirit. Before the priest senses he prays as follows: “We offer you incense oh Christ our God, unto a scent of spiritual fragrance, who has received in your super celestial altar, send down upon us the grace of your All Holy Spirit.” With this sending down we believers are altered, by the grace of God, into all-fragrant incenses, exuding the grace of the Comforter and each one of us becomes capable of living his personal Pentecost, evangelizing the joy of Christ to others also.



62<sup>nd</sup> Year

JUNE 15, 2014

Pamphlet #24 (3185)

## **THE CROSS OF LIFELONG CONFESSION**

The Lord praises the confession about Christ as Savior and God before men in today’s gospel message, beloved brethren. Truly, the train of thought of the true Christian shows from confessing, with discretion, the holy name of Christ before men, who are enmitous to the teaching of the Lord. This confession with boldness shows the believer, to be a true relative of Christ, who afterwards will confess him as such before his Father.

The saying of the Lord is very timely especially in today’s age, where a (proud) spirit of cowardice in confessing distinguishes us- when it is necessary naturally – that we are Christians, that we are fasting, that we’re going to church. Furthermore we are even thinking about doing our cross as we pass outside some church. Many of us think that we’re doing well to not “scandalize” those who think otherwise, even if they are the minority, since lately we very much respect the viewpoints of minorities, to such a degree, that the majority ought to yield out of democratic sensitivity. Saint John the Sinaite nevertheless, is very laconic and clear: “Cowardice is the perversion of faith.”

### **Love for father and mother**

Love for father and mother is different from love for Christ. They say that when it is healthy, the mother’s love for the child, is the most unselfish love which exists. In nevertheless Christ here, delves also into a person’s love for his parents, saying that if we place our parents above Him, we are not worthy of Him. It does not refer to different loves, but to different ontological orbits. The (correct) love even for parents is truly something awesome and orients man correctly in the world that he will live in, correctly building his psychosomatic hypostasis. The people who don’t know correct love for

## **THE SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS**

### **THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW 10:32-33; 37-38; 19:27-30**

The Lord said to his disciples, "Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." Then Peter said in reply, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first."

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their parents truly suffer. Christ's love for man, however is something overturning: it defeats death. So for this reason also, with his authority as God he even enters into the most close human relationships. Only as God can he do this, because if he were only man and was seeking such a type of "exclusivity", he would be the most abhorrent, dreadful form of humanity (Fr. Epiphanius Theodoropoulos). Consequently, loving Christ and confessing Him with words, but also with our life, we defeat death, which is what is sought for for each person.

### **Cross, burial and resurrection**

Cross, burial and resurrection comprise the triple necessity of spiritual life, the incarnated confession of faith in Christ. The cross reminds us of the bloody journey of the saints of God, and we ought to imitate each one of us carrying his cross. We crucify our senses and experience the pain of the cross. The burial reminds us of the enclosure of the mind in the depth of the heart in company with the divine name. There the mind is united with the heart and marriage suppers are held with the Triune God present. Thus the whole person is resurrected.

### **The last and the first**

There were people who accepted God's calling and then forgot the honor which was given them. A characteristic example is Judas. Judas as a "team guilty archetype" in the language of pastoral psychology and as a manner of behavior influences man, in becoming forgetful, fleeing from risks and finally being drowned by a demonic sadness and if possible to commit suicide. Furthermore,

we know that the devil was "a murderer of man from the beginning" (Jn. 8: 44). Others again set out their life with Christ having a very grave past and they shone brightly through repentance. A classic example of this journey is Saint Mary of Egypt. In her moving life one sees how great the power of repentance and prayer is which saves from despair. Our Church justly placed her memory in Great Lent in order to be, throughout the ages, an encouraging example of "the last shall be first".

There were, of course, also those Christians, who remained faithful to their calling from the first moment with all the temptations and obstacles they encountered. It was they who were patient in the winds of the temptations, in the burning heat and in the freezing cold of the passions, they who although they would fall would get up and again fall and again get up, oriented firmly towards the person of Christ.

No matter what group we belong to beloved brethren, let the fact that the Lord wants all of us to be saved, inspire us, so long as we also want it as well. Christ calls himself the spring which quenches people in today's gospel message, beloved brethren. More specifically He is speaking about the Holy Spirit, which whoever believes in Jesus Christ receives, how much more so whoever is participating in the liturgical life of our Church.

Truly, the reception of the Holy Spirit by people, as each one's personal Pentecost, is realized and is hymned in every Divine Liturgy in the way so that with the communion of the Body and the Blood of Christ, we cry out with joy and rejoicing: "We have seen the true light, we have received the heavenly spirit, we have found the true faith worshipping the indivisible Trinity, for this has saved us." Here the reception of the Holy Spirit is connected with the finding of the true and infallible faith. This again is expressed with the worship of our One and Triune God and the confession of our salvation. It could be maintained that this hymn comprises the victory song of our Church before the diverse uglinesses and "foul smelling" powers of darkness of every age.

### **A Feast of reconciliation**

Pentecost is a feast of reconciliation. We were reconciled with God. With the Ascension the deified human nature ascended and sat at the right of the Father. The heavens received this gift and in exchange they send down the All Holy Spirit, a sign of reconciliation with humans (the sacred Chrysostom). The All Holy Spirit proceeds timelessly from the Father, in time it is sent by the Son to us also and it rests on the Son. His gifts are infinite, they come from the one root and variously adorn each person. This occurs so that with humility